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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 PORT OF SPAIN 000249

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2018  
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TD](#) [XL](#)  
SUBJECT: CARIBBEAN SECURITY ASSESSMENT: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

REF: SECSTATE 51747 PORT OF SPAIN 190 PORT OF SPAIN  
63 PORT OF SPAIN 170 BARBADOS 329

Classified By: DCM LEN KUSNITZ, REASONS 1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) Summary: The GOTT is heavily focused on security concerns, both for domestic and regional reasons. It sees itself as under attack by criminal elements running guns and drugs from South America and is dealing with an explosion of murders -- many gang related. From its perspective, the GOTT is moving to create a "shell" around its nation to deter criminal activity while seeking to reform and further professionalize police and other security forces. It also is interested in countering the crime problem on the regional level; it leads CARICOM's security group and was the driving force behind its early April meeting. In the past, T&T has even offered to patrol much of the eastern Caribbean area, if the U.S. offered sufficient assistance (\$2-3 billion was mentioned at one point).

12. (C) Security cooperation between the U.S. and Trinidad is generally good, though the government has sometimes expressed overblown expectations about the resources the U.S. could contribute to the anti-crime fight. Paradoxically, though, it has not always made sufficient use of what it has been given, falling down on maintenance, reports and showing a penchant for going for the shiny new technological fix, as opposed to the slower route of also-needed institutional reform. The legal and justice system here could usefully benefit from modernization and technical advice. Passage and implementation of new laws on wiretapping and many of the other areas mentioned in the April 5 CARICOM security communique would be valuable. USG provision of equipment, including to help T&T assist in the regional anti-crime effort, also would pay dividends. End summary.

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## Latest Requests

13. (C) The porous borders throughout this region provide an attractive environment for transnational crime, shipping of drugs and possible terrorist activity. Recognizing this, and responding to public pressure over the spiraling crime rate, the GOTT spearheaded the April 4-5 CARICOM Heads of Government security meeting. Coming out of that session, Minister of National Security Martin Joseph specifically requested (ref b) the U.S. assist Barbados in restoring/upgrading two C-26s used by the Regional Security System (RSS). The Minister added that the GOTT would refurbish/upgrade its two C-26s, but asked to exchange another non-operating Cessna aircraft originally provided by the U.S. for an additional C-26. With two C-26s in Barbados and three in T&T, he stated, the RSS would then have a five plane air wing for interdiction and patrolling. Meeting the Ministers plane request, coupled with the GOTT explicit agreement to maintain the asset and use it and its other C-26s for regional operations as requested, would be a major indication to the government of our serious intent to cooperate.

## Transitions

14. (S/NF) Joseph also is spearheading the attempted

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transition of the Trinidad and Tobago police and Defense Force. He has advanced, for example, the establishment of a special combined military/police officer unit (SAUTT -- the Special Anti Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago) that is designed as an elite force to combat major crimes and kidnapping. It receives training from the U.S. and UK. When offered Special Operations Forces training for SAUTT (as part of OEF-CCA), Joseph eagerly accepted. We expect this training to begin by summer's end or in the early fall.

15. (C) The GOTT also is seeking major changes in police practices, including its promotion system and governing ethos, guided by a multi-million dollar consulting project headed by George Mason professor Stephen Mastrofski. Corruption, sloppiness in investigations and a lack of willingness among some officers to patrol hinder this effort. The GOTT also has been attempting to upgrade police equipment and stations, but this remains a slow and continuous uphill battle. To assist, we have offered several training courses to the GOTT, and equipment such as bulletproof vests. Continuing to offer training, and stepping this up as appropriate, is important, but the GOTT will need to show greater political will in carrying forward its reforms than has so far been evident.

16. (C) Critics charge the government, stymied by a lack of human resources progress, is looking for a silver bullet to combat crime by focusing on technological solutions. Closed circuit cameras are one instance of this, but the most notable -- and derided -- is the government's anti-crime airship (i.e., blimp). While the GOTT, and the airship's U.S. manufacturer, maintain the airship -- with lookdown cameras -- has made a real difference in crime rates, the blimp is scoffed at by many. In any assistance provided to the GOTT, we will need to keep an eye on this propensity, suggesting less "elegant" but more practical solutions.

## Procurements

17. (C) The effort to remake Trinidad's law enforcement forces is mirrored in attempts to strengthen the defense force's anti-crime role, especially in countering the transit of narcotics and guns through Trinidad and surrounding waters

that the government identifies as the powder for the ongoing crime explosion. As part of a broader plan, the government now has in place a 360 degree radar purchased from Israel and has on order from the UK three 90-meter offshore patrol vessels (with helipads). In addition, it has ordered six fast patrol craft from an Australian firm. The GOTT also is now in tendering for six interceptor ships and four helicopters (armed, it hopes, with mounted machine guns or rocket pods), and (as noted) intends to upgrade its C-26s. Finally, it has just taken receipt of two (interim) patrol vessels. The goal, as publicly stated by the GOTT, is to have an "imposing security blanket" for Trinidad and Tobago by 2011 when all the equipment has arrived.

¶8. (C) Although these new assets will enhance GOTT capabilities, maintaining them will be a challenge. It is not uncommon for equipment to break here and never be repaired. Given this, it is imperative to expand IMET training to include small boat maintenance as well as improved vessel operating techniques to minimize preventable damage. Our FY08 IMET program of \$86,000 is woefully inadequate to this task, especially when profiled against the

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expanded resources and patrolling plans the GOTT is considering. To meet the increased demands, and maintain other programs, \$750,000 would be needed for advanced training. Once its fleet is fully operational and adequately maintained, the T&T will be able to provide more consistent patrolling of its territorial waters, including protection of critical energy infrastructure, as well as be able to better participate in regional operations.

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Information Sharing  
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¶9. (C) Cricket World Cup 2007 brought regional information sharing to a new level, which should be upgraded and expanded on a permanent basis. This data sharing includes the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), the Regional Intelligence Fusion Center and the Regional Communications Center. In addition, the Advanced Cargo Information System (ACIS) should be put in place. The GOTT is in the process of passing legislation that will make the APIS permanent. In addition, the GOTT established a Passenger Analytical Unit (PAU) that analyzes this information and then acts upon it. Establishing PAUs or similar types of organizations throughout the region, which can utilize the APIS as well as other data that can be shared, would greatly enhance enforcement's ability to provide better border control. The USG should support these efforts by providing training, equipment and specifically, the PISCES software, which will make these efforts sustainable.

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Forensics, DNA and Witnesses  
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¶10. (C) With Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) funds, Post is providing the GOTT with cyber crime training and a cyber forensics laboratory and training center. The project, led by DS, should help this laboratory to become an effective tool, enhancing capabilities for tracking a host of computer-dependent information. This new capability will be an important adjunct to our counter narcotics, money laundering, and counterterrorism efforts. It also will compliment the northern Caribbean's laboratory to be housed in Antigua. In conjunction with the cyber forensics laboratory, the GOTT has already established a DNA laboratory. However, the DNA laboratory is in need of accreditation and assistance in becoming fully operational. Targeted U.S. assistance to this lab, including provision of equipment essential for accreditation, would enhance T&T's ability to prosecute complex crimes. As part of our discussions covering assistance to the lab, we also could

broach the possibility of it becoming regional in nature.

¶11. (C) Due to witness intimidation, the GOTT has requested assistance with its witness protection program. Though the program has a perfect success rate for witnesses that remain in it, many persons drop out due to lengthy trials, lack of mobility and poor employment possibilities. Unfortunately, several of these drop-outs have then been murdered. Given the small size of T&T and other CARICOM members, Post supports a regional approach to the witness protection program and the April 5 CARICOM communiqué indicates that there is at least some interest in exploring this possibility.

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Legal Changes

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¶12. (C) A hindrance to greater security is the often slow and inefficient judiciary and the lack of certain laws that would aid in the anti-crime/terrorism effort. Post has continually encouraged the GOTT on legislation that we believe would be of utility and were gratified to see many of the ideas we had raised with the government contained in the April 5 CARICOM statement. One such piece of legislation, mentioned in the communiqué, would legalize wiretapping under judicial control (ref c).

¶13. (C) We agree with Barbados (ref e) that a dedicated regional legal/legislative/Administration of Justice Adviser could be an important asset to governments in this area and support the creation of such a position/program. In looking at the legal system, though, it is worth noting that T&T and several other Caribbean nations' legal systems are based on the British model. This recognition may open up areas for discussion with our British and Canadian colleagues.

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Air Marshals

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¶14. (C) For some time now, we have been seeking T&T's agreement to be included in the Federal Air Marshal (FAM) program. Our request seems to be caught in the continuous loop of the GOTT bureaucracy. This is an area that we can raise with the GOTT and, more broadly, CARICOM.

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LNG Infrastructure

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¶15. (C) Trinidad is our leading supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG). DOE, DHS and the Coast Guard's Port Security Division collaborated on a detailed assessment of critical LNG infrastructure protection presented in mid-May to the GOTT. Assessment recommendations focused primarily on maritime domain awareness and land-based interdiction capabilities, with additional attention to intelligence sharing and cyber security. GOTT implementation of USG agencies' maritime recommendations in particular will entail tradeoffs, with implications for T&T's aspirations to patrol outside its own territorial waters. USG agencies are currently organizing for follow-up discussions with the GOTT on an implementation timeline of approximately 18 months. This level of engagement on energy infrastructure protection may be difficult to justify with other Caribbean countries. Nevertheless, T&T demonstrated its willingness to work with the U.S. on this issue at the regional level when it co-hosted with DOE and SOUTHCOM the Caribbean Energy Infrastructure Security Workshop on May 14-15.

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CARICOM IMPACS

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¶16. (C) At the April 5 CARICOM meeting, IMPACS (Implementation Agency for Crime and Security) was charged with monitoring and assisting with the following agenda items: maritime and airspace cooperation and the sharing of assets; intelligence and information sharing; procurement of equipment; rapid deployment of regional forces; and general crime prevention. At this meeting, IMPACS also was designated as the entity to be granted access to INTERPOL's

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telecommunication system (ref D).

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Financial Support  
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¶17. (C) Embassy Port of Spain currently has the following levels of foreign assistance:

-- In FY2008, Post received \$397K in INCLE funding and is expected to receive \$500K in FY2009. These funds are the main source for enhancing equipment and providing training to T&T's law enforcement agencies.

-- In FY2008, Post received \$86K in IMET funding and is expected to receive \$100K in FY2009. This training provides subject matter exchanges and other courses (in country and in the U.S.) to the T&T Defense Force (TTDF) to transform and modernize the force, bolstering its role in narcotics interdiction in territorial waters.

-- In FY2008, Post did not receive any FMF funding; however, we have requested \$750K for FY2009. These funds will be used for defense modernization, enhancing control of T&T's national territory and support for maritime interdiction.

-- In FY2008, Post received \$889K in NADR funding but does not expect to receive any funds in FY2009. These funds were used for a variety of Diplomatic Security/Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) training programs.

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Comment: Multilateral with a bilateral twist  
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¶18. (C) Given the centrality of security issues in the Caribbean, a coordinated USG effort to deal with this matter is both timely and welcomed. It also holds the potential for underscoring both to governments and peoples of the region that we are focused on their key concern, one that affects everyday life, taking a psychic toll, an economic toll and a human toll. It also serves U.S. national interests, countering a crime and terrorism threat from a vulnerable region.

¶19. (C) In approaching how to assist the region, we suggest that the U.S. consider engaging CARICOM on a multilateral basis first, but also make explicit that we will not be held to this as circumstances warrant. Also, we should make clear that assistance is a two-way street. If T&T, for instance, gets a new C-26 from us, it needs to use this aircraft in joint exercises and for regional purposes (maintaining its airworthy status and preparing required reports), as well as for its own internal requirements. Finally, in looking at the region and Trinidad, we may want to consider how we can meld this prospective initiative into the ongoing cooperative Summit of the Americas work.

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